



Gerald L. Baliles, Director & CEO



ARE WE THERE YET?

Selling America on Transportation

David R. Goode National Transportation Policy Conference

*Norman Y. Mineta and Samuel K. Skinner, Conference Co-Chairs
and former Secretaries of Transportation*

Jeffrey N. Shane, Conference Director



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Faulkner House, home to the Miller Center, University of Virginia

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LETTER *from* GERALD L. BALILES, DIRECTOR

Charlottesville, Virginia

On behalf of the Miller Center I thank you for your continuing interest and support of our national transportation policy project. In 2009, the Miller Center hosted the inaugural David R. Goode National Transportation Policy Conference in Charlottesville, Virginia. Eighty of the country's leading transportation thinkers convened at the Miller Center to articulate a new agenda for federal transportation policy in the 21st century. The resulting report, titled *Well Within Reach: America's New Transportation Agenda*, outlined a set of substantive, bipartisan recommendations to address and alleviate our nation's transportation challenges in the decades ahead.



Those recommendations have since been embraced by a wide range of stakeholders and have won attention at the highest levels of government. On October 11, 2010 the Miller Center's report was featured in a White House briefing hosted by President Obama and including Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. At the time, President Obama expressed support for expanded investment in America's transportation systems. Noting that "our infrastructure is woefully inefficient and outdated" and that "we are already paying for our failure

to act," the President declared: "We can no longer sit still."

"Sit still," however, is more or less what Washington has done on transportation issues for 15 months since that Rose Garden ceremony. Amid an increasingly polarized debate over how to deal with the nation's long-term debt and deficit problems, and despite the recent emergence of transportation bills from the House and Senate, discussions about transportation reform have been largely sidelined. Today, with the stimulus funding of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act all but exhausted, with revenues to the Highway Trust Fund projected to remain flat or decline, and with not only federal but also local and state budgets still stretched tight by the lingering effects of the recession, the outlook for future investment in the U.S. transportation system and for needed policy reforms is far from clear.

Frustrated with this lack of progress and seeing a need to elevate transportation issues and more effectively communicate the importance of infrastructure investment to the American public, the Miller Center convened our second conference in November 2011. We gathered 60 experts to listen to research on which messages about transportation are likely to be most compelling for a broad audience and to strategize about ways to draw attention to the nation's transportation challenges in the near future.



Gerald Baliles with Secretaries Skinner, Mineta, Peters, Slater, and Burnley

Our gathering was noteworthy for bringing together no fewer than five former secretaries of transportation—a first. Secretaries Norman Mineta, Sam Skinner, Mary Peters, Rodney Slater, and James Burnley shared success stories and lessons learned over 18 years of collective experience as the nation’s leading voice on transportation issues, spanning 22 years, five presidential administrations, and numerous political shifts in the U.S. Congress. A keynote address by Representative John Mica, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, described the current state of the debate—noting positive and negative forces for progress in this Congress and the next.

As always, we are tremendously grateful to Secretaries Mineta and Skinner for serving as our co-chairs and providing leadership in this effort. We also thank Miller Center Visiting Fellow Jeffrey N. Shane for his advice and assistance in organizing our biennial conference. The ongoing support of David Goode as well as the support of Caterpillar Inc. allowed us to develop the advocacy plan described in this report and remain absolutely invaluable to our work going forward.

This report presents the results of the strategy discussions that occurred at the November 2011 conference and reflects the combined wisdom of our assembled experts. We believe it provides a roadmap for effectively capturing the nation’s attention and uniting the American people behind a compelling message about the urgent need for investment, innovation, and improvement in our transportation systems. We hope this report captures the attention of the American public and that Congress and the administration are compelled to act.

Gerald L. Baliles

LETTER *from* THE CO-CHAIRS

Transportation keeps the American economy humming. For future prosperity, transportation policymakers must make strategic investments in smart projects with defined outcomes. There must be adequate funding, both for the maintenance of existing systems and for the further expansion and interconnection of new systems. Transportation experts, stakeholders, and users agree that change is needed.

To set change in motion, however, there must first be public pressure for transportation investment and reform. Despite broad support in principle, however, active

public engagement on these issues has been elusive. While many Americans experience the inefficiencies of our current transport systems on a daily basis, other impacts—such as the impact of lost productivity on the broader economy or the impact of high transportation costs on the price of goods—are less immediately obvious. Faced with other urgent concerns and economic challenges, many Americans believe we simply can't afford to invest in transportation repairs and upgrades given our country's current budget situation. Many also do not have faith that money allocated to transportation projects will be used in the most efficient and effective ways possible.

Simply put, there is a lack of confidence and trust in the ability of policymakers to make good decisions in transportation policy and planning. And without a mandate from the broader public, most policymakers don't want to risk reforming the current system in a political landscape fraught with many other challenges and competing demands.

The Miller Center convened its second biennial David R. Goode National Transportation Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. to pose the question: *How do we craft a compelling message that captures the attention of the public so that Americans become engaged in the issue of transportation reform?*

The timing for a broad-based campaign focused on the need for smart transportation investments and related policy reforms is propitious. The next presiden-



Mineta



Skinner



Former Secretaries of Transportation James Burnley, Rodney Slater, and Norman Mineta listen to observations about the need for better communications from former Secretary Samuel Skinner.

tial election is only months away. Congressional reauthorization of existing transportation programs is long overdue, even as congressional interest in ways to accelerate the economic recovery and jump-start job growth remains high.

The recommendations in this report grow directly from the conversations that took place at our November conference. We believe they provide a solid foundation for rallying all Americans around a transportation agenda that is equal to the challenges of a new century.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The idea of devolution has been around for a long time. The question is how do we get programs to be impacting people at the local level?

Not what the national, federal program can do for you at the local level—because that top-down just hasn't worked, especially with the nature of the polarization of people and politics today.

NORMAN Y. MINETA



President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1954. The Interstate Highway System It is widely acknowledged as the greatest public works project in our nation's history.

The 2011 David R. Goode National Transportation Policy Conference caught the U.S. transportation policy debate at a crossroads in its decades-long history. Lack of progress on a transformational policy agenda combined with a sense of urgency about the need to maintain and improve the nation's transportation infrastructure had both frustrated and energized conference participants. They agreed that another plan or more supportive rhetoric was not necessary. What is needed is tangible action. This report reflects that focus. It proposes a set of practical, actionable recommendations grounded in the themes that consistently emerged over two days of conference discussions.

Much about the current transportation debate is, of course, familiar: funding challenges and policy disagreements have always been part of the reauthorization cycle for the federal government's transportation programs. **Today these challenges are: (1) overlaid by a chronic shortfall in revenue flows to the Highway Trust Fund; (2) a focus on fiscal austerity that is driving much of the political discourse; and (3) a lack of public trust in the federal transportation program.** In this environment, the tradition of broad bipartisan support for investments in surface transportation has largely broken down.

Research and experience, however, suggest that this erosion of support for transportation investments does not necessarily extend to the American public. Most citizens voice support for public spending on transportation when they perceive that this spending will result in positive outcomes at the local level. In general, the public also remains receptive to the message that smart transportation investments can make a positive long-term

contribution to economic growth, U.S. competitiveness, and job creation. These findings form the basis for many of the recommendations in this report.

Conference participants agreed that 2012 is important to bring attention to the issue, harness a confluence of forces, and open the door to fundamental change in U.S. transportation policy and programs. The first part of the year has already seen early bursts of legislative activity, though it remains unclear whether this activity will lead to the passage of a long-term reauthorization. At the same time, a national conversation about how to create the conditions for economic recovery in the short term and sustained economic prosperity in the long term is taking place in the context of the 2012 election. This conversation presents an opportunity to raise public awareness of the importance of transportation investments and to inject transportation issues into a larger debate about the nation's challenges and priorities in the decades ahead. Leveraging that opportunity will require a thoughtful, well-coordinated, and high-profile communications strategy.

The communications strategy we recommend has four key features or elements:

1. **A positive, forward-looking tone that frames the transportation debate around issues of economic growth, jobs, and U.S. competitiveness, combined with quality of life. (See page 20)**
2. **A well-defined but flexible campaign plan that is keyed to the rhythms of an election year and to important events in the transportation calendar. (See page 21)**
3. **A focus on building broader engagement through effective, targeted use of traditional media and social media. (See page 24)**
4. **A concerted effort to link local transportation investment opportunities and benefits to national-level policy decisions.**

Conference participants are under no illusions about the difficulty of being heard in an election year, let alone the difficulty of setting a substantive reform agenda in motion at a time of extreme political polarization and intense resistance to public spending of all kinds. Nevertheless, we are confident that a concerted advocacy effort, built around the central elements we have recommended, can achieve the objective we have set for ourselves: to raise a sense of awareness and urgency about the importance of transportation investment and to create the conditions for real and lasting change in our nation's approach to transportation.

Gerald L. Baliles
Director & CEO, Miller Center
University of Virginia
Former Governor of Virginia

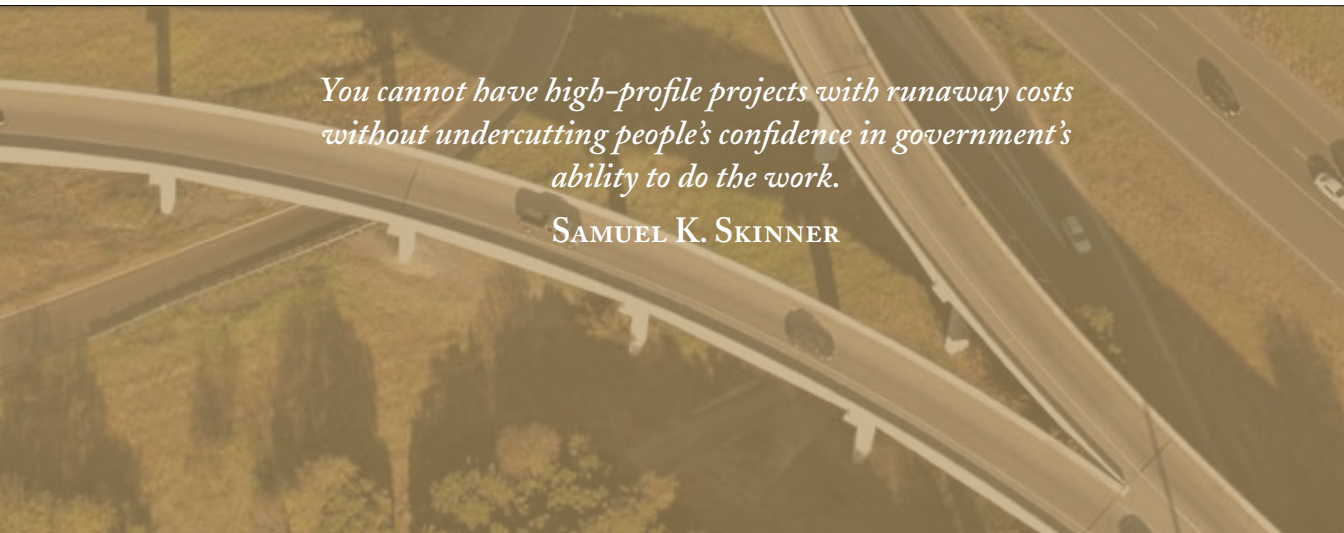
Jeffrey N. Shane
Conference Director
Partner, Hogan Lovells
Former Under Secretary for Policy, USDOT



HOW TO GET THERE

*You cannot have high-profile projects with runaway costs
without undercutting people's confidence in government's
ability to do the work.*

SAMUEL K. SKINNER





We've got to focus less on wasteful earmarks and outdated formulas. We've got to focus more on competition and innovation. Less on short-sighted political parties and more on our national economic priorities. Investing in our infrastructure is something that members of both political parties have always supported. It's something that groups ranging from the Chamber of Commerce to AFL-CIO support today. And by making these investments across the country, we won't just make our economy run better over the long haul; we'll create good, middle-class jobs right now.

There is no reason why we can't do this. There is no reason why the world's best infrastructure should lie beyond our borders.

This is America. We've always had the best infrastructure. This is work that needs to be done. There are workers who are ready to do it.

All we need is the political will. It is the season for choices and this is the choice—between decline and prosperity and between the past or future.

—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

ROSE GARDEN CEREMONY WITH CONFERENCE
CO-CHAIRS NORMAN MINETA AND SAMUEL SKINNER, OCTOBER 11, 2010



UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT CONTEXT: WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHAT HASN'T

Transportation policy in the United States is wrapped in a paradox of historic dimensions: Rarely has more public concern about a vital prerequisite to America's economic health and competitiveness been met with such sustained inaction by the institutions of our government. Despite the widely acknowledged and unprecedented challenges to the viability of the established structure and funding of our transportation system, we are a nation that is utterly without a plan.

At a time of great uncertainty and growing frustration it is worth highlighting two elements that have stayed largely constant for as long as transportation policy has been a subject of public debate. The first is a recognition that maintaining robust, efficient, well-linked systems for moving people and goods is a matter of vital national interest, one with high stakes for America's future prosperity and one in which government at all levels has an important role to play. A second constant has been the importance of political leadership in elevating transportation issues and building support for action.

*Maintaining robust, efficient,
well-linked systems for moving
people and goods is a matter of vital
national interest.*

Throughout the 20th century, American presidents advocated comprehensive solutions to our country's communications, commerce, and transportation needs. Congressional leaders—though at times resistant to particular projects or policies—were generally able to bridge differences and find compromises to push through funding for transportation improvements. The result has been an infrastructure system that connects our nation's coastal cities with America's heartland and the rest of the world, offering our citizens unprecedented mobility and creating vital links that allow U.S. companies and workers to participate fully in the global economy.

The roots of this success and the beginnings of the modern transportation era are often traced to 1954 when President Eisenhower sent Vice President Nixon to the National Governors Association conference to unveil his "Grand Plan" for "a properly articulated system that solves the problems of speedy, safe, transcontinental travel."¹ The following year, President Eisenhower called on Congress directly to support an ambitious

interstate highway program:

“Our unity as a nation is sustained by free communication of thought and by easy transportation of people and goods. The ceaseless flow of information throughout the Republic is matched by individual and commercial movement over a vast system of interconnected highways crisscrossing the country and joining at our national borders with friendly neighbors to the north and south.

Together, the united forces of our communication and transportation systems are dynamic elements in the very name we bear—United States. Without them, we would be a mere alliance of many separate parts.”

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower,
February 22, 1955

In the years that followed, Oval Office support was vital to sustain the interstate highway program, widely acknowledged as the greatest public-works project in our nation’s history. Not that transportation investment was usually a tough sell for political leaders during this period. After all, most members of Congress and the American public agreed—and indeed many would still agree—with the assessment of President Johnson,

as he signed legislation to establish the U.S. Department of Transportation in 1966: “In large measure, America’s history is a history of transportation.”

Today’s debates, in stark contrast to those of an earlier era, are taking place in an atmosphere of paralysis.

Successive Administrations and Congresses worked together successfully, often bridging partisan differences, to bring about

steady improvements and innovations in our transportation systems. The most recent evidence of this tradition was found in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA, 1991), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, 1998), and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005). Thanks to those powerful legislative achievements, America enjoyed 15 years of responsible innovation—important, incremental advances in the structure and governance of the country’s essential transportation system.

The “can-do” spirit and bipartisan agreement that has driven transportation policy for so much of America’s history, however, has changed during the past several years. Today’s debates, in stark contrast to those of an earlier era, are taking place in an atmosphere of paralysis. And while a number of complex factors are at work, the reasons for the underlying impasse are not difficult to discern. Two imperatives have collided: on the one hand the imperative to invest in a transportation system that will continue to grow our nation’s economy, create jobs, and enhance U.S. competitiveness; on the other hand, the imperative to come to grips with the nation’s short- and long-term fiscal problems, including espe-

Successful Execution: The Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project

The Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project—a highway connecting Washington's Virginia and Maryland suburbs that is traveled by hundreds of thousands of cars a day—was opened to traffic in 1961. Decades later, three phases of renovation began. Completion of the first bridge occurred in 2006, the second bridge was dedicated in 2008, and the third phase of the project — reconstruction of the reconstruction of the Telegraph Road interchange — is expected to be completed in 2013.

A review of *The Washington Post* headlines over the course of the project reveals just how much inconvenience and disruption major infrastructure projects in highly populated areas can cause. Some of *The Washington Post*'s most descriptive headlines included: "Brake-Light Weekend Ahead on The Wilson" (May 30, 2008) and "Beltway drivers to experience up to four-mile delays" (December 3, 2009). Still the \$2.5-billion project is touted as one finished with demonstrated success since it has come in on time and on budget, and has received awards and accolades.

Jointly sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Maryland State Highway Administration, and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, it serves as an example of a unified vision among numerous transportation entities. It is also an example of burgeoning trends in transitions from federal to state and local entities since the District of Columbia jurisdiction will relinquish ownership right and responsibility for the new bridge to the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia upon its completion. Virginia and Maryland will then exercise joint responsibility for the operations, maintenance, and activities of the bridge.

Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley praised that unified vision in the 2008 dedication ceremony, stating, "It is a symbol of partnership and cooperation between our federal, state, and local governments, and a tribute to what we can accomplish as a people when we come together around a common goal."

The Wilson Bridge is the mid-point of Interstate 95, the east coast's busiest highway. Since an estimated \$100 billion of commerce is moved across the bridge each year, and the expansions from six to 12 lanes saves drivers and truckers 40 minutes a day, according to the AASHTO's "Unlocking Gridlock" report, it is heartening to hear that the work underway on this critical link in the region's transportation network is one supported and commended by transportation experts.

Sources:

- AASHTO. (April 2010) "Unlocking Gridlock". Retrieved from: <http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com/AASHTO%20report.pdf>
- "Building a New Wilson Bridge". Washington Post. 2008–2009. www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/linkset/2006/06/09/LI2006060900577.html
- Maryland Department of Transportation (2008) "Governor O'Malley Joins Others in Dedicating the Second New Woodrow Wilson Bridge". [Press Release] Retrieved from: www.mdot.maryland.gov/News/2008/May%202008/WWB%20Ribbon%20Cutting.htm

cially the federal treasury's unsustainable and still growing level of debt. In short, it's not that our political leaders don't agree that transportation is important or that infrastructure investments are needed; rather they can't agree on whether or how to fund those investments given the current budget situation.

The fact that the current impasse has already lasted several years suggests that there is no obvious resolution close at hand. Comprehensive reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program last occurred in 2005. It expired in 2009. With reauthorization now more than two years late, the federal program has had to rely on short-term extensions. These have happened nine times thus far, and we may see even more. The situation was even more serious on the aviation side where efforts by Congress to pass a comprehensive reauthorization of the federal aviation programs took 22 short-term extensions before a long-term reauthorization was achieved. In August 2011, the program was actually allowed to expire, leaving 4,000 Federal Aviation Administration employees out of work for two weeks—an unprecedented occurrence in the history of the program.

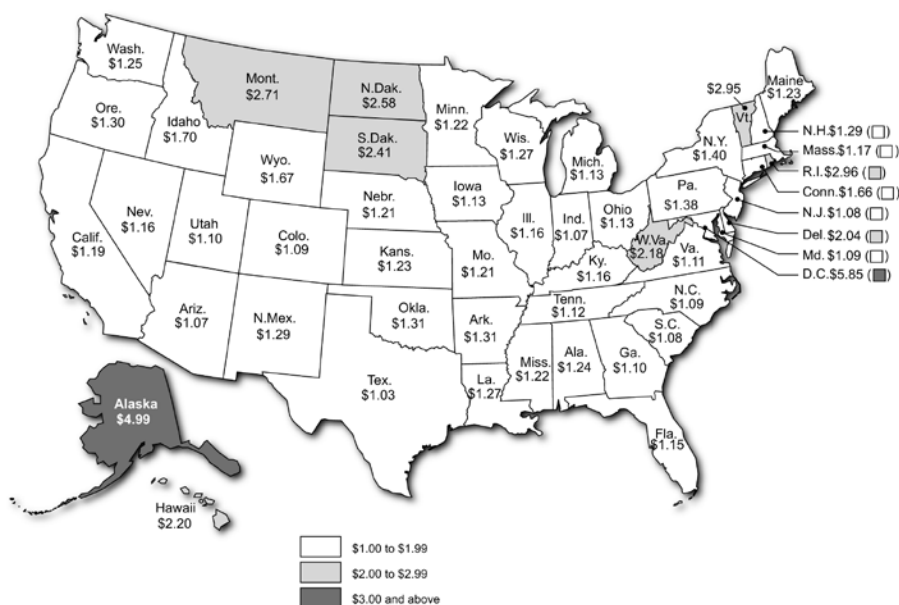
Moreover, the current impasse has persisted despite broad agreement among lawmakers, stakeholders, and the general public about the need for infrastructure investment. In joint public appearances before key congressional committees, non-traditional allies like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO have called for action on transportation infrastructure, emphasizing its nonpartisan nature and its central place in our nation's

Because benefits (and deteriorating public works) are experienced at the local level, focusing on specific local projects has the greatest potential for garnering support.

economy. Meanwhile, recent public-opinion surveys have found overwhelming support for the idea of infrastructure investment. In a 2011 survey conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation, for example, two-thirds of voters said that improving the nation's infrastructure is important, and 80 percent agreed that federal funding to improve and modernize transportation "will boost local economies and

create millions of jobs from construction to manufacturing to engineering." Similarly, a poll conducted by CBS News and *The New York Times* between October 19 and October 24, 2011 showed that eight in ten Americans "approve of government spending for roads and bridges as a way to boost employment."² However, in these times of lagging public investment in many policy areas, transportation is not seen as the top investment necessity.³

Of course, public support for infrastructure spending—including transportation—is neither universal nor unconditional. After the "bridge to nowhere" controversies of recent years, the public has become sensitized to issues of pork-barrel spending and understandably demands to see a clear connection between federal expenditures, actual transportation needs, and economic benefits. The priority accorded to transportation investment also varies from region to region and community to community, since most Americans



States' Rate of Return per Dollar Contributed to the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund, Using Same-Year Comparison Data, Fiscal Years 2005-2009.
(GAO-11-918, Oct 12, 2011)

view infrastructure challenges and successes through the lens of what is happening in the places where they live and travel. Typically, people in urban areas such as Los Angeles are more aware of deteriorating infrastructure and place a higher priority on investing to maintain and improve existing systems, particularly if they feel vulnerable to disasters that could significantly impact essential services, (such as earthquakes that could cause a loss of power and water, or jeopardize vital bridges and roadways). Citizens of rural areas, by contrast, tend to have fewer complaints about the condition and adequacy of the infrastructure around them and are therefore less likely to see transportation investment as an immediate priority. Because benefits (and deteriorating public works) are experienced at the local level, focusing on specific local projects has the greatest potential for garnering support. Perhaps this explains why a 2010 study by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association found that at the local level,

The report shows that every state received more highway funds than the revenues it collected from federal excise taxes between 2000 and 2009.

voters approved ballot measures that involved proposed transportation spending by an average rate of 63 percent.

Not surprisingly there is much less agreement in the general public and among policymakers about how to fund transportation investments, even in cases where there is broad agreement that such investments would be desirable. The same Rockefeller poll that showed widespread appreciation for the value of transportation investment with 80 percent of voters agreeing that federal funding to improve and modernize transportation

will boost local economies and create millions of jobs from construction to manufacturing to engineering. Seventy-one percent of voters oppose an increase in the federal gas tax with majorities likewise opposing a tax on foreign oil, the replacement of the gas tax with a per-mile-traveled fee, and the imposition of new tolls to increase federal transportation funding. Lack of public consensus on specific revenue measures, or even on the need to raise federal revenues for transportation in the first place,

Congress used general revenue to make up the difference between motor-fuel excise-tax revenues and transportation outlays by bailing out the Highway Trust Fund to the tune of \$34.5 billion.

further the current stalemate. How much transportation spending is needed and how that spending should be distributed has always been a subject of debate. But in recent years the transportation discussion has become part of a larger, higher-stakes disagreement over federal spending more broadly about the best way to address the nation's mounting debt problem.

This overarching dynamic is exacerbated by the fact that in recent years, federal spending on surface transportation has consistently outpaced collections in the Highway Trust Fund. In October 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report titled, "Highway Trust Fund: All States Received More Funding than They Contributed in Highway Taxes from 2005 to 2009". The report shows that every state received more highway funding than the revenues it collected in federal excise taxes between 2005 and 2009. The GAO points out that its exact numbers vary based on the calculation method used, but the overall trend is consistent: more money has been spent on transportation than has been collected from transportation system users for this purpose. The chart on the previous page quantifies the mismatch for each state between 2005 and 2009.

Between 2008 and 2010, Congress used general revenue to make up the difference between motor-fuel excise-tax revenues and transportation outlays by "bailing out" the Highway Trust Fund to the tune of \$34.5 billion. Additionally, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided an additional \$26.7 billion for highways. Without an additional influx of general revenue or other sources of funding, however, the levels of spending currently authorized for the highway program are not sustainable. This creates a shortfall that Congress will need to address as part of any comprehensive reauthoriza-



tion of the federal transportation program. That in turn means raising revenue or cutting spending, neither of which is an attractive option in the current economic, political, and fiscal environment.

To date, no solution has emerged. As we go to press, moreover, it seems clear that no solution can be expected before the end of the current Congress. Even if the House and Senate achieve agreement this year on pending legislation to reauthorize our surface transportation programs, that legislation is likely to be of relatively brief duration—expiring in less time than it has taken Congress to enact it. It will also leave wholly unaddressed the most important transportation policy issue facing the nation: the need to establish fresh, contemporary, and sustainable mechanisms for financing the maintenance and expansion of America's vital transportation infrastructure.

There is no shortage of forward-looking, politically practical, and achievable recommendations available to the Executive Branch and Congress, including some that were commissioned by Congress itself. Inexplicably, however, a veritable chasm appears to separate that important body of work from the legislative process. We need to bridge that divide, and to do so quickly.

Regardless of the outcome of the current deliberations, work to stave off the next funding crisis will need to resume more or less immediately. It is essential, as that work

begins, that the Administration and Congress acknowledge clearly the need for meaningful reform at long last. We need clear and realistic thinking about a host of critical issues, including the respective roles of the federal government and the states, accelerating project delivery, tolling and other pricing strategies, the role of private investment, and the future of the gas tax. Without a fundamental change in approach, sustainable, long-term solutions are likely to remain elusive and the current impasse is likely to continue, all to the nation's great detriment.

Endnotes

- 1 Eisenhower, Dwight. "Message of the President of the United States. Paper communicated to Congress, Washington. D.C. February 22, 1955." www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/research/online_documents/interstate_highway_system/1955_02_22_Message_to_Congress.pdf
- 2 www.pollingreport.com/budget.htm
- 3 Pew Center for the States and Public Policy Institute of California. "Facing Facts: Public Attitudes and Fiscal Realities in Five Stressed States". 2010. www.nasca.org/BudgetingFiscal/PCS_PPIC.pdf



WHAT'S NEEDED: A NEW COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The last section described the impasse Congress confronts regarding a real policy dilemma—identifying a sustainable and politically viable source of revenue to fund needed transportation investments—without either a bipartisan willingness to compromise or organized public pressure to perform and invest. Absent a greater sense of urgency about the need to act, Congress is likely to continue defaulting to repeated extensions, and comprehensive reauthorizing legislation will remain caught up in larger disputes about the federal debt and spending.

Participants in the Miller Center's second biennial Goode Conference sought to develop a communications strategy that would identify a path out of the current impasse. They shared the view that the right message carried with the right mix of compelling voices on the local and national stage could spur political leaders to set aside their differences, rise above the current quagmire of inaction, and take steps to adopt and pursue a vision of transportation policy for the 21st century that will drive economic growth, enhance U.S. competitiveness, and create jobs. Ultimately, the hope is that a sea change in public awareness and engagement will transform reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program into “must-pass” legislation. Based on discussions at the conference, it was agreed that for a new communications strategy to succeed, it must include four central elements or features:

1. A positive, forward-looking tone that frames the transportation debate around issues of economic growth, jobs, and U.S. competitiveness, combined with quality of life.
2. A well-defined but flexible campaign plan that is keyed to the rhythms of an election year and to important events in the transportation calendar.
3. A focus on building broader engagement through effective, targeted use of traditional media and social media.
4. A concerted effort to link local transportation investment opportunities and benefits to national-level policy decisions.

The first three of these elements or features is discussed below; we believe that the fourth—an emphasis on local transportation issues as a way to engage broader constituencies and build pressure for national-level policy reforms—is part of the overall communications strategy and is included in each of the specific campaign elements we recommend.

Setting a Positive Tone

Research has found that a positive, forward-looking tone is more effective for engaging key audiences in transportation investment. A message that focuses on the benefits of transportation investments and its potential to improve Americans' lives is relatable, while negative tones and fear-based messages are not as compelling. In addition, audiences react well to messages that emphasize the future and progress.

In contrast to past transportation advocacy campaigns, which have tended to send negative messages (such as focusing on the harmful consequences of failure to repair crumbling infrastructure), we recommend a set of more positive messages that combine themes of economic development, job creation and quality of life. The examples suggested below reflect the most up-to-date research and can be tailored to the specific needs of the moment as part of a broader communications strategy:

- 1. Transportation infrastructure is the backbone of a strong U.S. economy and the American way of life.** Projects that are long overdue can provide the boost our economy needs—such projects can be found all across the country.
- 2. America needs economic growth and jobs right now, together with a long-term plan for keeping our economy moving.** Transportation infrastructure is the key to all three—and we need our leaders to help us invest in it.
- 3. We need Congress to take action so that our community and others like it can get America moving again.** We need Congress to pass a long-delayed transportation bill that grows our economy, brings jobs and investment, and helps us all build a stronger, more competitive America.

A comprehensive communications strategy could also include several important “sub-messages,” such as the following:

Infrastructure projects will create jobs and economic growth.

Infrastructure investment can help put millions back to work during difficult economic times and build our national economy.

Infrastructure investment will help make the U.S. more competitive.

Roads, bridges, and rail systems support the movement of goods across our country

every day and are critical to a strong U.S. economy. By more efficiently connecting individuals, communities, and businesses, we can create a modern, competitive economy for the long term.

Rebuilding our nation's infrastructure will improve Americans' daily lives.

From commuting to work to shopping and accessing services, all Americans depend on safe, functional roads, bridges, and highways. Improvements in transportation infrastructure have a direct impact on quality of life.

The U.S. needs a smarter plan and clearer priorities for infrastructure investment.

Congress needs to lead our country in a new direction when it comes to transportation infrastructure. This means a nationwide strategy that supports economic growth as a whole—rethinking how we talk about infrastructure; how we plan investments; how our federal, state, and local governments share funding responsibility; and how we hold people accountable. It also means creating a sustainable system that pays for itself—we can't spend more than we have. At the same time, our country should recognize transportation spending for what it is—investing in our economic future.

Congress must move beyond partisanship.

Partisanship and paralysis are not strategies for fixing an economy. What America needs is investment. The longer Congress fails to act, the longer we miss out on millions of jobs and years of growth. We can't let that happen.

Targeting a Flexible Strategy

Galvanizing support for transportation investment in the midst of a presidential election year, when every major national issue group will be vying for the spotlight, will be challenging to say the least. Success will require a broad-based communications strategy that is both carefully planned and highly flexible. Flexibility is needed to take advantage of opportunities when they arise and to be continuously responsive to new developments. Clearly, a hard-and-fast plan conceived in the fall of 2011 would falter if adhered to rigidly throughout 2012.

We envision a campaign that is designed to extend through all of 2012–13 and that takes advantage of the election cycle and key events in the transportation calendar. These events create several natural “hooks” around which a communications campaign could be built:

1. Expiration of the current surface transportation bill reauthorization
2. July 4 week(end), traditionally a time when the news media feature driving stories
3. The Democratic and Republican presidential conventions
4. The 2012 elections
5. The post-election transition period

These events could be used to mark phases of the broader campaign, with evolving priorities as follows:

1. Expiration of the current surface transportation bill reauthorization
 - **Priority:** Identify and begin to raise awareness of local projects that deserve federal support
 - **Priority:** More aggressive social media work
 - **Priority:** Roll out new messages
2. July 4 week(end)
 - **Priority:** Use media focus on driving, gas prices, and congestion to raise awareness of transportation issues and the need for action
 - **Priority:** Activate growing social media networks
 - **Priority:** Adapt messages to take economic, election realities into account
3. The presidential conventions
 - **Priority:** Make sure that transportation infrastructure is part of the discussion at both conventions
 - **Priority:** Create “virtual actions” that activate social media supporters
 - **Priority:** Clearly position infrastructure as an election issue
4. The 2012 elections
 - **Priority:** Ensure that the major party candidates recognize and speak to the importance of transportation
5. The post-election period
 - **Priority:** Send a clear, high-profile message that the American people demand action on transportation infrastructure investment from the next Congress and administration

Advancing Trust: The End of Earmarks

President Obama, in his 2011 State of the Union address, stated that the “American people deserve to know that special interests aren’t larding up legislation with pet projects, both parties in Congress should know this: If a bill comes to my desk with earmarks inside, I will veto it. I will veto it.” The pledge was an endorsement of the moratorium on earmarks enacted by House Republicans in 2010, and although the Senate did not endorse the plan, the president’s support of it effectively made their opposition moot.

It also marked a new era for the planning and awarding of transportation projects.

Considering that there were more than 7,000 earmarks in the last transportation reauthorization (SAFETEA-LU), this pledge marked a dramatic shift away from past earmarking for transportation projects that may not necessarily have been the most competitive, efficient, or necessary undertakings. For many, it is a sign that policymakers must exercise more fiscal restraint and oversight and pick the best projects instead of those that may be deemed most beneficial for specific groups. However, some have viewed earmarks as a valuable tradition that members of Congress can use to secure projects benefitting their constituencies. Further, an ancillary benefit acknowledged during the conference was that the promise of earmarks served as a valuable incentive to capture the attention of and secure action by lawmakers on transportation legislation. One panelist noted that no significant transportation reauthorization has really been able to gain momentum since the rejection of earmarks.

However, the consensus was that eliminating the practice of earmarks in a climate where the American public demands greater fiscal accountability and transparency was a step in a positive direction. This change could eradicate famously wasteful projects like Alaska’s “Bridge to Nowhere” and restore voter confidence in the ability to choose and deliver transportation projects that are completed on time, on budget, and with tangible positive results.

Miller Center conference participants thought that many Americans may not even know that the earmark ban is in place. Under that assumption, it was identified as a development that Americans should be made aware of as part of any advocacy plan designed to improve the public understanding for the need and benefits of an adequately funded transportation system.

Source:

www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/transportation-policy-and-congressional-earmarks



Building Wider Engagement Through Traditional and Social Media

Given the nature of communications today, any large-scale campaign should aim to drive traditional news coverage while also creating momentum on newer social media networks. An effective campaign would broaden gradually, building awareness and expanding its network of engaged supporters. This notion of sustained activity that grows over time and activates a broad constituency of supporters would distinguish the type of campaign we propose from previous efforts. In effect, the effort could be seen as turning

In effect, the effort could be seen as turning the issue of transportation investment itself into a candidate.

the issue of transportation investment itself into a candidate. The ultimate goal would be to make this issue an integral part of the ongoing national debate about how to accelerate and sustain the economic recovery and create an imperative for Congress to act on transportation legislation.

Social media can serve as the “glue” that ties many disparate activities together; used effectively, it can strengthen any communications effort and grow the chorus of voices calling for action. Many major national transportation advocacy groups already have experience leveraging social media platforms

such as Facebook, Twitter and FourSquare. The strategy we recommend would include using these platforms and others to reach out to existing online audiences with an interest in transportation-related issues and to build a new constituency of supporters that can send messages to decision makers at key moments.

Conference participants identified a variety of ways to communicate a proactive transportation message through different media platforms:

Local/State Media

- Op-eds and letters to the editor from local residents and other leaders
- Print and broadcast coverage of local projects
- Profile stories on local leaders and economic priorities

Beltway Media

- Stories that draw the attention of elected officials to the issue—including creating opportunities for supportive officials to speak out
- National stakeholder bylines highlighting the importance of infrastructure as an economic issue

National Media

- National broadcast and print coverage profiling local leaders, priorities, and projects
Important to show the breadth and growing strength of the nationwide call for action as the campaign grows over time
- Outreach to campaign reporters to discuss election and infrastructure
Goal is to incorporate discussion and emphasis on infrastructure into campaign “issue” coverage, including in key states
- Editorial board briefings
Engaging leading publications on transportation issues will bring credibility and focus

Online Media

- Introduce new and leading bloggers and online journalists to the infrastructure debate, reaching their large and highly-engaged audiences
- Share compelling digital content—video, graphics, personal stories
- Connect online coverage with social media platforms through tweeting, Facebook posting, and others



CONCLUSION: CHANGING THE DEBATE

Through a smart, aggressive, and coordinated new communications effort, transportation advocates and stakeholders can elevate their issue to a level not experienced since President Eisenhower's era. A campaign of sufficient scope and with the appropriate mix of tactics and messages can move national elected officials to take note of stakeholder priorities and incorporate these priorities into transportation policy proposals and discussions. An effective campaign can also generate a swell of grassroots and traditional engagement efforts that helps national stakeholders maintain advocacy pressure, generate new content, and build a broader base of support for meaningful transportation reform.

It is our belief that once citizens become aware of the significant costs and risks associated with a compromised transportation system operating at less than optimal capacity, they will feel more compelled to demand calls for action that will, in turn, prompt policymakers to act. Experts studying transportation needs have long stated the importance of the one to energize the other; the way in which this plan differs from other well-established and well-received studies is the means that we propose for capturing the attention of citizens. Whereas past efforts focused on the traditional messengers and messaging techniques to publicize their message, this new advocacy and messaging plan turns to a new group and new techniques to catalyze change. We believe this can work.



CONFERENCE NOTES

If we can make the translation to the public in an understandable way that efficient transportation systems help save money, make the costs of our goods less, and make us more competitive on the national stage, then I think we can really begin to make some progress.

MARY E. PETERS

Plenary Address: The Outlook for Reauthorizing and Financing America's Highway

We are at a crossroads in transportation policy. Congress and the administration face difficult choices, and state and local governments will be deeply affected by funding choices.

Jack Basso

Director of Program Finance and Management, American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials

Jack Basso opened the conference by framing the outlook for Congress to act on overdue authorization for highway and transit programs. The backbone of transportation funding, the 55-year-old Highway Trust Fund (HTF), is in “critical condition” and has approached bankruptcy three times in the past few years, which is unprecedented. Two essential questions frame the discussion on the outlook for financing and funding transportation projects:

1. What is the federal government's role?
2. How can the federal government and state governments best generate the revenue required to implement projects?

The National Transportation Financing Commission estimated the gap between necessary investments and Highway Trust Fund revenue at \$400 billion over six years; the Policy and Revenue Study Commission established a \$225-billion annual need with only \$90 billion funded. While specific estimates vary, there is no doubt that a significant

It is important to note that current proposals on the table do not offer solutions to the funding gap; moreover there is opposition—including from President Obama—to raising the gas tax at present.

gap exists. In this context it is important to note that current proposals on the table do not offer solutions to the funding gap; moreover there is opposition—including from President Obama—to raising the gas tax at present.

Basso described the road ahead as being as unclear as he had ever seen it in his 48 years working on transportation issues. The crux of the problem is that both the federal government and the HTF court bankruptcy when expenditures exceed revenues. This is particu-

larly problematic for the trust fund, which can't operate in insolvency.

Vehicle miles travelled (VMT) in America rose for 50 years, but peaked in 1998. Since then it has dropped precipitously. We have seen a \$5-billion annual reduction in the amount of revenue collected during the past five years. Considering inflation, and noting that the last increase in the gas tax was in 1993, the revenues collected today will only buy 20% of what they bought in 1993.

In FY 2012, transportation programs managed with \$2 billion less in federal funding



Jack Basso addresses the conference.

for highways and roughly level funding for transit programs. In 2013, if the federal surface transportation program is operating only on revenues collected by the Department of Transportation, it will be an \$11.6-billion program—a massive reduction. In 2014, funding for transit programs will suffer the same fate as funding for highways, meaning it will be reduced by half, according to Congressional Budget Office figures.

Systems that collect funding on the basis of VMT have come to the forefront and will play an important role in the future; Basso identified their implementation as one of the most promising solutions for addressing current revenue shortfalls. An increase in the gas tax or something similar is the only thing that will work quickly within the allotted time—although such revenue-raising measures are probably the least politically achievable. Indexing the existing gas tax to inflation has value but should have happened ten to 15 years earlier.

Basso listed legislative principles that should be maintained by policymakers in the upcoming reauthorization:

- Maintain current federal and state shares for highway and transit capital programs, which represent 45% in state and local budgets and about 55% of the total;

- Eliminate earmarking in federal transportation programs;
- Develop programs that support maximum flexibility to allow the use of conventional and innovative funding tools;
- Devote major effort to find an offset to pay for a two-year or a five-year bill at current levels;
- Find acceptable funding sources to pay for a well-funded six-year bill; and
- Adopt policies that are in keeping with a flexible and adoptable bill that will allow us to move forward.

It is important to confront people with the importance of transportation investments. Congress is beginning to move and will move when members recognize in a bipartisan

We must make bipartisanship an important part of any messaging to bolster credibility.

way the absolute need to move. The public needs to push them there. Bipartisanship has been an absolute hallmark in transportation policies going back to 1956. To achieve progress, we must make bipartisanship an important part of any messaging to bolster credibility.

Transportation Secretaries' Roundtable

Five former secretaries of transportation traced efforts to publicize transportation messages to the American public over the course of several presidential administrations and evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of those efforts.

The Honorable James H. Burnley

Secretary of Transportation (1987–1989)

The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner

Secretary of Transportation (1989–1991)

The Honorable Rodney E. Slater

Secretary of Transportation (1997–2001)

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta

Secretary of Transportation (2001–2006)

The Honorable Mary E. Peters

Secretary of Transportation (2006–2009)

This was the first time five former secretaries of transportation convened to reflect on the importance of transportation, lessons learned from their own experiences with respect to the challenges of messaging, and proposed solutions.

Secretary James H. Burnley

Secretary Burnley referred the group to a recent Pew study in which respondents in five urbanized states were asked to rank K-12 education, Medicaid, higher education, and transportation by order of importance if cuts had to be made in the funding for each. Transportation ranked last—both in terms of perceived importance and in terms of respondents' willingness to have taxes raised to cover it. These results illustrate the challenges the transportation community faces regarding public support on the issue. More reports are not needed. Instead, we need some critical changes to combat the cynicism and build trust on the part of the public. He cited four issues that perpetuate cynicism:

- The raiding of highway funds at the state level during times of financial crisis;
- The presence of enhancements on the federal level that do not address critical transportation issues;
- The perception that earmarking is rampant in transportation; and
- The treatment of infrastructure as a short-term jobs program without longer-term vision and planning.

Instead, Secretary Burnley proposed selling the idea that transportation infrastructure needs to be funded for the sake of transportation infrastructure—instead of for other reasons.

Secretary Samuel K. Skinner

Secretary Skinner outlined his perspective from “outside the Beltway.” He brought up the American public’s cynicism and the need to increase public confidence in how money is spent, while also increasing the ability of state and local governments to spend money appropriately when given the opportunity. In his view we’re still suffering the “residue from products that got out of control,” like the Big Dig, which was estimated at \$3 billion but came in at \$19 billion. That skepticism follows projects that are already underway, such as high-speed rail. “You can’t have high-profile projects with runaway costs without undercutting the American people’s confidence in the ability to do [projects as planned],” Skinner stated. “We need to sell and publicize those projects where money and projects are being undertaken effectively—on time and on budget.”

We need to sell and publicize those projects where money and projects are being undertaken effectively—on time and on budget.

Skinner likened this approach to being on a public board, where a company will do a two- or three-year follow-up study following major capital expenditures to assess their performance. Conversely, those responsible for managing underperforming projects do not want the accountability of these look-backs so there is that added incentive to perform well when some measure of accountability is assured.

Secretary Rodney E. Slater

Secretary Slater spoke about his experience in the DOT, where he began with new legislation that demonstrated the ability of the agency and the private sector to deliver good projects and serve as strong partners. During the Clinton Administration, Congress raised the gasoline tax and built on existing legislation (ISTEA) with TEA-21. Even with similar levels of distrust in the government as seen today, the public was supportive. Secretary Slater stressed the importance of helping people understand that there are competent individuals—both in the public sector and in the private sector—who are willing to move forward with important transportation projects. Transportation is best described as the means by which other parts of life deemed more important by the public, such as education and health care, can be enjoyed more completely.

Secretary Mary E. Peters

Secretary Peters said given the funding shortfalls we are facing we should focus on the “need-to-do” rather than “nice-to-do” projects. She outlined some “nice-to-do” projects, such as high-speed rail and railroad museums, and said that type of project should not be prioritized over “fill[ing] the gaps” in transportation funding. Peters also said that alternatives to the gas tax must be explored, in light of new fuel-efficiency standards since the tax “isn’t sustainable, it isn’t reliable, and it’s not going to get us into the future.” Sec.



Secretaries Peters, Burnley, Slater, Skinner, and Mineta

Peters said that Congress has not increased the gas tax since 1993 because the public has lost confidence in Congress spending the funds in a way that they can see an improvement in the transportation system - a lack of investor confidence. Like the others, Peters emphasized the importance of highlighting projects where the public sees success, so they become aware of good returns on transportation investment.

Secretary Norman Y. Mineta

“Never undertake vast projects with half-vast ideas.” Secretary Mineta began his speech with this advice from his father, which has obvious applications to transportation projects. Secretary Mineta also observed that although transportation is actually a small part of the economy, the entire economy relies on transportation. While transportation systems are vital, they are ignored unless something goes wrong. Mineta proposed a basic messaging strategy and suggested enlisting the states as messengers for highlighting transportation program successes and touting these successes to constituencies that are positively impacted by the programs.

The entire economy relies on transportation.

Panel Discussion: Where Are We Now?

The session looked at current thinking about best ways to forge a new approach to transportation in America, reviewing recent efforts and progress and identifying future opportunities.

Jeff Shane

Panel Chair

Partner, Hogan Lovells

Marcia Hale

President, Building America's Future Education Fund

Emil Frankel

Director of Transportation Studies, Bipartisan Policy Center

David Burwell

Director, Energy and Climate Program, Carnegie Endowment

Nicholas Turner

Managing Director, The Rockefeller Foundation

Ashley Halsey III

Staff Writer, *The Washington Post*

Jeff Shane opened the panel by emphasizing the need to talk about transportation in public forums, especially when it isn't a popular or hot topic for discussion.

Nicholas Turner was asked to discuss his vision for the transportation sector and what has attracted the Rockefeller Foundation to the topic. He pointed to Secretary Slater's observation that transportation was much more than "steel and concrete"—transportation is about connecting people and goods and how that can benefit the economy. Transportation costs are the second largest source of expense for American households and the largest source of expense for low- and middle-income Americans. Without a

plethora of transportation options, most people have to own a car. The question is how to "sell" the issue so that something gets done.

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Ashley Halsey was asked to reflect on how infrastructure and transportation can be pushed to the forefront. He stated that it hasn't

been difficult to push transportation stories to the forefront in *The Washington Post*, but that these issues really need to be brought to the attention of the public in other ways as well. Halsey also said that stories about investment frequently get pushed back as airline bankruptcies and other crises snag front-page placement.

Emil Frankel assessed the progress of his organization's work to promote transportation as a bipartisan issue. He pointed out that it has become increasingly difficult to look to bipartisanship for solutions, given that today's political environment is characterized by bitter partisanship. Beyond the issues being discussed at the conference, efforts to



Panelists Turner, Frankel, Halsey, Shane, and Hale

frame a national agenda and a national purpose have been caught up in the extraordinarily difficult fiscal situation. We have to recognize the economic and fiscal realities and find common ground to explore solutions that can move forward. Frankel recommended identifying key issues and places where transportation advocates can demonstrate a real return on investment.

Marcia Hale talked about some communications efforts that are already underway, including a grassroots campaign and a media campaign. She feels the country is far ahead of Washington in wanting change; she also believes there is support for transportation improvements. Building America's Future has initiated grassroots campaigns in South Carolina as well as New Hampshire and has achieved promising results.

David Burwell foresaw a huge change in the outlook for transportation as truly a key stepping stone for economic growth. He agreed with Hale about the effectiveness of grassroots campaigns in getting the word out. State departments of transportation have

Frankel pointed out that it has become increasingly difficult to look to bipartisanship for solutions, given that today's political environment is characterized by bitter partisanship.

been showing initiative and developing programs and momentum. An example was the green DOT program in California. Burwell found that his job is really about promoting economic growth and quality of life.

Turner noted his agreement with Burwell's point that people do want to see change in the transportation sector, but Washington has trouble connecting with that. Turner went on to observe that there is a hunger for transportation solutions but also a disconnect between aspirations at the local level and what goes on with authorization at the federal level.

Frankel emphasized the importance of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP 21) bill and pointed to its success as an example. He said that elements of performance management should show up in future bills. He also noted that there is a challenge in pushing for investment as a long-term goal because it is too often seen as short-term spending when it shouldn't be. Hale said that as much as performance measures are important, the most important thing to talk about is reform, accountability,

There is a need to package transportation ideas more effectively.

and performance. She expressed the view that transportation advocates often don't address how they talk about this subject and focus too much on measuring success, which misses the problem. Halsey agreed, pointing out that it is important to push people to think on a larger,

more long-term level, because it seems now that people are primarily concerned with potholes and congestion. Translating local successes into national trust actions has proved difficult. Frankel asked how one might paint a picture so that people in Tennessee can see the benefits of the CREATE project in Chicago.

Hale summed up the session by emphasizing that there is a need to package transportation ideas more effectively, while Turner added that there is a need to frame things in the national interest. An emphasis on thinking globally and being creative in communications with constituents is critical to developing and maintaining investments and results that are sustainable over the long term.

Keynote Address with the Honorable John Mica

The Honorable John R. Mica

Chair, House Infrastructure and Transportation Committee

Chairman Mica's keynote address focused on the current congressional political climate as it pertains to transportation policy. He used the opportunity to discuss what he has encountered in his efforts to get the current authorization plan passed and to underscore the need to "sell" transportation to the American public, particularly in tough economic times.

Mica believes "there is a bill before Congress that could have a greater immediate impact than passing a longer-term transportation bill, funded as fully and responsibly as we can, and also a long over-due—four years now—FAA authorization." He explained the holdups in the draft authorization, which he had originally hoped to debut in the waning weeks of 2011, will result in further delays given the constraints of time and the intent to have as many people participate in its drafting as possible.

The election year also presents additional roadblocks as members must pay attention to issues in their districts to gather support for re-election. Financing is the biggest hang-up in moving the authorization legislation to date. Mica recounted that Republicans were brought to Congress in 2010 to reduce the deficit and spending and are operating within that mandate. "The gas tax increase wasn't going to happen last year. It sure as hell won't happen this year, and there's more [members of Congress opposing spending] coming....and the group coming in is going to be even tougher on financing," he predicted.

The group coming in is going to be even tougher on financing.

With that in mind, Mica proposed a reauthorization earlier in 2011 that would only use trust-fund revenues earned and attempt to leverage those dollars to be more successful. Many said it was a "road to ruin" since using only the proceeds from the trust fund would result in a 25% to 30% reduction in current levels of funding. Speaker of the House John Boehner has committed to working with the committee to find another way. A final extension of the FAA authorization was adopted following the partial shut-down.

Mica stated that his new target is a higher level than the \$35 billion that he proposed in 2011. He then focused on the importance of long-term reauthorization, stating that he hoped it would be possible to extend new funding from five years to six. Shorter time-lines, like the recent two-year extensions, only lead to smaller projects.

To further optimize federal investments in surface transportation, Mica is committed to multi-modality with as many port and rail options incorporated as possible. He also hopes to move towards consolidating programs and eliminating duplicative ones.

Mica closed with three points:



1. You can do just about anything in transportation projects if funding is available.

Mica referenced the 33 transportation infrastructure banks already in place and his preference for enacting TIFIA loans and loan guarantees to provide financial capacity to existing institutions, rather than creating a national infrastructure bank. His view is that doing so would put people to work more quickly.

2. We must find efficiencies to free up resources for reinvestment now, along with a new revenue source for the future. This approach could result in an additional \$6 billion to reinvest. Mica believes we can take money from existing programs and still make them work better. He supports finding a new source of revenue based on vehicle miles traveled—although his timeline for establishing such a mechanism was longer than some transportation advocates have proposed. Overall, Mica described current attempts to bridge the funding shortfall—the task he and other committee members will confront in crafting a reauthorization—as a “band-aid” until new and different funding mechanisms can be identified and implemented. He said the pieces of a new approach are not in place and likely will not emerge until the tenure of a future chairman.

Mica described current attempts to bridge the funding shortfall as a “band-aid” until new and different funding mechanisms can be identified and implemented.

3. We must streamline project delivery. Even “shovel-ready” projects are often significantly slowed by current approval processes and other barriers. According to Mica, President Obama realized that there were many bottlenecks in getting projects funded despite the fact that only \$63 billion out of the \$787 billion stimulus package was allocated to transportation programs. His administration plans to speed up and streamline the process of “getting money out” to programs so that transportation projects intended to create jobs can get underway.

In closing, Chairman Mica invited any and all ideas that conference participants believed would improve America’s transportation programs. Secretary Skinner thanked Chairman Mica for his comments and thanked him for his work to date, including his vigilance in halting bad projects from moving forward, which would help improve the credibility of transportation policymakers in the eyes of the American public.

Panel Discussion: The Compelling Story Of Transportation and Economic Growth

One of the most worrisome consequences of continuing on the current course is the decline of U.S. international competitiveness. This panel discussed how greater efficiencies in America's transportation infrastructure improve the nation's economic vitality, and how businesses have effectively conveyed this message.

Janet Kavinsky

Panel Chair; Executive Director, Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Edward Wytkind

President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Steve Watson

Vice President, Government and External Affairs, Loews Government Affairs Services

Norman Chambers

CEO, NCI Building Systems; Chair, Let's Rebuild America Leadership Council

This panel explored the link between transportation and economic vitality. Janet Kavinsky launched the discussion with the observation that transportation infrastructure was in the public consciousness now more than it ever had been in the past. She cited the frequent appearance of infrastructure topics on daily shows as one example.

Many in the transportation world talk about the necessity of bringing business to the table, and that is beginning to happen. The business community is an important partner that can help highlight the link between transportation and economic success. Kavinsky spoke about the national Chamber of Commerce's mission to generate interest

The business community is an important partner that can help highlight the link between transportation and economic success.

in transportation at the level of states and local chambers of commerce, as well as among small and large businesses across the country, through a combination of advertisements and compelling messages. She said the Chamber wants to make sure that the nation's jobs agenda includes transportation as a top priority and detailed how the Chamber plans to work to ensure transportation is included. Part of the

challenge is moving interest in transportation issues from "policy wonks" to the public.

Edward Wytkind used his introductory comments to emphasize (a) that his organization represents workers across the entire transportation economy and (b) his organization believes it is important to inject workers into the transportation debate and transportation concerns into politics. What the AFL-CIO has found is an incredible



Panelists Kavinoky, Wytkind, Watson, and Chambers

shift where transportation messages aren't resonating despite a dire transportation situation. In the 1990s, congressional transportation committees mobilized in a bipartisan way even in bad budget years because they couldn't let transportation systems fail. Wytkind said the Ryan budget cuts would never have been considered in earlier days, indicating that current messaging on transportation issues is ineffective. Both parties also used to protect transportation investments—in fact they actually inserted statutory protections—to ensure that money would not be poached from these programs. Policy discussions used to be about “out-investing” each other instead of “out-cutting” each other, he said. The conversation has changed, and policymakers and insiders must return to the outlook that transportation is a national responsibility and a national interest imperative. Wytkind's final introductory point was that the gasoline tax used to be this “mutually-assured destruction pact” with both parties saying they wouldn't talk about raising it. Now the conversation has turned to “out-cutting each other,” exposing the shortfalls of a system that did work for a while.

Steve Watson began his comments by focusing on why infrastructure investment as a national priority is critical to the travel industry and the broader economy. The travel industry accounts for \$1.8 trillion in economic output or about 7.5 million jobs annu-

ally. The hotel sector alone accounts for \$131 billion and 1.7 million jobs. International travel is a major component, according to Watson. Twenty percent of visitors to the U.S. are international travelers; however, although the rates of international travel globally have grown about 40 percent in the last decade, the U.S. share of that travel has only increased by two percent. The travel industry faces challenges, particularly with respect to international travel:

- A poor job to date in terms of advertising and marketing the U.S. as a travel destination;
- An antiquated, cumbersome, expensive, and bureaucratic visa process. Travel to the U.S. from China requires travel and a visit with a visa officer, which is a 90-day process. By contrast, the visa process for the same person to travel from China to Europe is less than 10 days.
- America's inadequate infrastructure—including especially inefficient and unwelcome airways and airports that serve as a gateway to international travel. U.S. aviation ranks 32nd in world behind Panama, Chile, and Malaysia, according to Watson, and the American Society for Civil Engineers gives U.S. aviation infrastructure a “D”.

Significant transportation infrastructure investment and improvements would allow the U.S. to compete in the way that we should be able to. As a travel association, Watson said that engaging this debate about how to make transportation a national priority is a top concern. He said the travel industry is investing in the Chamber and

Building America's Future, which represents a lot of people and provides an opportunity for a healthy alliance.

Unless we can make the message about something bigger and grander than roads, bridges, and energy, we will not ever be able to get the nation behind a more ambitious program of transportation infrastructure investment.

Norman Chambers described the perception of small-business owners within his coalition that their side did not prevail in the outcome of the Super Committee. This speaks to the role that conversations about transportation play in the larger debate about balancing federal budget priorities. The current transportation message collides with the perception that we have done a poor job of taking care of

infrastructure for the past 30 years. The question then becomes: “Why do we want to give more money to those people tasked with handling the issue who have not done what they should do historically?” Chambers expressed the view that unless we can make the message about something bigger and grander than roads, bridges, and energy, we will not ever be able to get the nation behind a more ambitious program of transportation



infrastructure investment—even though it is a compelling message. He said the message doesn't register unless there's a catastrophe. The public wants to be sure that the stewards of taxpayer dollars are making economically sensible decisions. With that in mind, there can be some discrepancy between the perception of long-term benefits versus immediate short-term risks, as seen with the Channel Tunnel, which was great but also bankrupted three companies. As a whole, private companies are more efficient than three or four years ago, which translates into the public's expectation that the government should be just as efficient in the utilization of funds and execution of programs as the private sector.

The panel explored the recent phenomenon of governors returning federal money to Washington, specifically New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's decision to cancel the Hudson Train Tunnel. The Christie decision captures the issue of investment, economic growth, and how projects are perceived. The Hudson Train Tunnel project promised to deliver enormous long-term state, regional, and national benefits as well as short-term construction jobs. It was also shovel-ready—an important point given the immediate economic situation in New Jersey. The fact that Christie didn't pay any political price for making this decision is a lesson in messaging. Advocates for transportation investment have clearly failed to make the case effectively if there's no political price for cancelling

these sorts of projects. The Christie decision also points to the inability of the business and labor communities to come together around large infrastructure projects and call political leaders out on “bad” infrastructure decisions. There are two ways to solve the political problem:

1. Bring electoral politics out of the issue to make it bipartisan; or
2. Give the issue a huge injection of politics and hold people accountable for bad decisions.

We’re straddling the middle, not doing a good job following either path. In conclusion, Chambers returned to his point about a collision between the need for financing and public concern about how tax dollars are spent.

The panel then discussed the importance of tone in messaging. Good news isn’t going to make the news cycle or garner media attention in Washington; however, it can make a greater impact on voters. The question becomes who are we talking to and do we need different message for those groups? One commenter pointed out that TEA-21 did a good job of showing how authorized funds were used in order to prove competence—in his view this was an immensely positive approach and one that is more effective than trying to convince the public that “the sky is falling.”

New communications methods and attitudes are also important. Social media has the capacity to engage people in causes. The transportation advocacy community gets caught in silos in its messaging—e.g., shippers only, carriers only, enhancements only—that do not necessarily resonate with the population at large and with public thinking about transportation issues. There is also the dangerous tendency of Washington “insiders” to dismiss opinions from a large segment of the U.S. public because they think they are smarter than those segments of the public and have better ideas. Transportation advocates must listen to non-experts and tap into their interests and energies.

The panel reflected on how America as a nation could return to doing big things. Chambers noted that some good things are happening. Non-residential construction is growing and people are re-evaluating manufacturing opportunities in some good ways, like bifurcating supply chain. While it is troubling in that there aren’t as many big things on the national agenda, we should be impressed with the good things that are happening on a smaller scale. Perhaps we can grow small, economically responsible endeavors into “big things.” Wytkind added that the continued use of the 1950s air traffic control system shows that we’re not doing big or small things. “Why aren’t we talking about NextGen navigation systems in a travel environment where people may wait three hours on a tarmac?” In Wytkind’s view this represents a failure on the part of transportation insiders. It also suggests the need for more conversations on the prospects for public/private partnerships, especially with regard to projects like NextGen. Perhaps the travel community could provide support for projects like NextGen, as they see the toll it takes to continue the current pattern of under-investment.

Panel Discussion: Examining the Data and Establishing a Baseline on The Effectiveness of Transportation Messaging

Three organizations have conducted investigations into public opinion on transportation to uncover attitudes towards infrastructure investment and messaging and to explore what communications strategies are likely to be successful in promoting transportation.

James Corless

Panel Chair; Director, Transportation for America

Rich Thau

President, Presentation Testing, Inc.

Brian Pallasch

Managing Director of Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives, American Society of Civil Engineers

Jim Mulhall

Managing Director, SKDKnickerbocker

There is a mentality among transportation advocates that they are right and simply need to wait for everybody else to come along and agree. Internally, the transportation community is able to communicate effectively. But it also needs to develop the ability to look forward and communicate a vision externally. The importance of transparency and public trust to the future success of the transportation industry and to the ability to pass legislation that collects revenue for transportation investments cannot be ignored.

Rich Thau conducted research on messaging around transportation issues in 2011. His work yielded five key findings:

1. **A clear partisan split exists over transportation spending.** Conservatives were staunchly against transportation spending that involved raising more revenue. Liberals were generally in favor of increasing spending if it was required.

2. **There is strong opposition to wasteful spending.** This focus on wasteful spending is not concerned with a shortage of money but with the ineffective use of resources that are already available.

3. **Lawmakers face an inability to ever defend earmarks because the term has become incredibly stigmatized.** Members on both sides of the aisle reacted negatively towards it use.

4. **Voters do place value on infrastructure in specific circumstances.** They understand that infrastructure is critical to economic growth; therefore, the debate centers on how to build up infrastructure and with what funds. In general, people are not willing to pay more. Thau's team explored several arguments for raising revenue. They found that conservatives take a hard-line stance against tax increases even when national defense purposes are presented as the justification.



Panelists Thau, Mulhall, and Pallasch

5. **There is a tangible need for a plan and accountability.** There is also a general concern with “free-for-all” spending, with some respondents expressing the view that accountability by the government is impossible.

The bottom line is that the left can be won over with correct transportation messaging, but convincing the right will be extremely difficult.

Brian Pallasch with the American Society of Civil Engineers has recently begun to analyze the economic impact of failing to invest in transportation. The ASCE has produced four studies on infrastructure that look forward to 2020 and 2040 and attempt to quantify the economic harm from a sustained lack of infrastructure investment. These studies highlight three key findings:

1. **The elites recognize that infrastructure is the backbone of the American economy because it determines how we move people, goods, and energy.** However, public understanding of actual infrastructure problems is inconsistent. One way to improve this understanding and rally support for solutions is to articulate problems on a local and regional level as well as on a national level.

2. **Americans need to see a long-term plan and an overarching vision for improving the nation’s infrastructure.** This can be fostered through greater transparency within the

transportation industry.

3. Certain arguments and words are significantly more effective in winning public support. Arguments centered on jobs, economic development, and quality of life, as well as on keywords such as “progress,” “modernization,” and “outdated,” are much more likely to be successful. Certain keywords, such as “repair” and “crumbling,” as well as any kind of absolute statement had a negative impact on support. Transportation advocates should emphasize that infrastructure support will greatly strengthen the American economy.

Jim Mulhall presented the findings of a very specific study that focused on Republicans who support the Tea Party in southern New Hampshire and Charleston, South Carolina. These areas were chosen for their political relevance in the upcoming presidential election. Survey respondents bought into the fundamental premise that America’s infrastructure needs work to make repairs and expand capacity. Their responses suggest that it is we how we talk about infrastructure that matters. The discussion must be centered around long-term support and growth of the economy instead of immediate job impacts. The importance of a reform agenda was evident. People respond positively to notions of greater accountability and transparency. Any reform agenda would also be bolstered by private-sector involvement, which people view as beneficial because of the influence of competitive market forces. The big takeaway is that infrastructure is “a hard sell, and there is incredible resistance to spending across the board.”

*Their responses suggest that it is we
how we talk about infrastructure
that matters.*

The panel discussed the idea that in a crisis-driven society, a major transportation failure—such as a bridge collapse—will spark support for infrastructure investment. The general consensus was that an event of this kind would not trigger lasting support and has failed to do so in the past. Instead, compelling arguments must be made to acquire the appropriate resources and money.

In other words, the importance of infrastructure investment must be forcibly argued, and people must be assured that there will be benefits and that money will not be wasted. Thau underlined the idea that no one is rushing to cut transportation funding as the first step in reducing the national budget.

The panel concluded by discussing the types of messengers who are most effective. Often, politicians and developers are the least effective messengers, while medical professionals are most effective.

Session Summary: Mapping a Path Forward

The purpose of this session was to draw on the expertise of Glover Park Group—a public affairs and strategic communications firm—to review and evaluate evolving trends in messaging and to suggest communications tools to build, organize, and activate public support for investment in U.S. transportation infrastructure.

Catharine Ransom

Managing Director, Glover Park Group

Ryan Cunningham

Senior Vice President, Glover Park Group

Alex Mistri

Managing Director, Glover Park Group

Craig James

Managing Director, Glover Park Group

This session sought to wrap up the conference discussions and provide concrete insights, analysis, and recommendations aimed at advancing a longer-term transformational transportation policy agenda as well as a near-term agenda focused on reauthorization legislation. It culminated in a robust audience discussion that is summarized below.

The panelists reviewed the state of the debate in Washington and concluded that the current national focus on austerity is framing policy discussions around every issue in Washington. Infrastructure is no exception. This focus makes it even more difficult to resolve what is already a challenging and fundamental question facing the federal surface transportation program: namely, how to identify a viable funding source to fill the gap between current spending levels and available revenue. Other significant policy questions remain in play, such as how to respond to public mistrust by adopting performance and accountability measures and by implementing rigorous project selection criteria.

Fundamentally, it will be difficult to make progress on the type of transformational transportation legislation contemplated in the Miller Center's 2010 report until a greater degree of urgency is injected into the current political environment. The key challenge for the transportation community is how to generate a sense of urgency and need for action that will create an environment in which tough decisions can be made.

Given this situation, the current state of the transportation agenda, and the structure of existing campaigns within the advocacy community, the panel offered several recommendations for further discussion:

1. **Transportation investment must be communicated in a local frame.** Research, experience, and conference discussions suggest that in spite of the national focus on austerity, the public is willing to invest in transportation when the results are concrete and

locally recognized. For that reason, transportation advocates should work to increase their focus on local communities and tap advocates for existing projects to demonstrate the scope and diversity of public support for transportation investment.

2. Mistrust in the federal government is significant. There is much work to be done to rebuild trust between engaged citizens and the federal government. Advocates must demonstrate that there is a clear link between strategic investments in infrastructure and economic growth. A communications strategy must incorporate messages about the need for a smarter plan, clear priorities and performance measures. The exact format of these accountability measures will ultimately be determined through the legislative process, but they cannot be ignored at the outset of any communications effort.

3. Intentional and consistent use of positive messages, presented in a local frame using local voices, is critical. Messages focused on economic growth, job creation, and U.S. competitiveness, combined with quality-of-life improvements, are most effective. Defining these issues in terms of how investments at the local level will achieve broadly held goals is important.

4. Sustained communications activity that grows over time will be more effective than a set of sporadic and unconnected activities. Working together, the transportation community can create a growing awareness and urgency around transportation infrastructure issues. But any such effort must be maintained over time to be effective.

5. Engaging new audiences in the transportation debate is critical in order to broaden the conversation. A thoughtful effort to identify and activate these audiences through social media should be strategically deployed.



Conference participants respond to the advocacy plan.

Questions and Discussion

The conference concluded with a vigorous question and answer session involving all audience members and participants. The discussion focused on several key issues:

Using a local frame for transportation communications—Attendees brainstormed ideas on where and how projects could be identified for cooperative efforts. Location was central to this discussion, since participants concluded that it made sense to select projects in locales where a national conversation is already underway. Additional criteria for selecting projects included the existence of a link between outcomes and economic growth as well as the ability to withstand a “bridge to nowhere” test.

Scope and magnitude of communications efforts—Attendees pondered whether it is in fact possible or necessary to “change the mind of the American public on transportation.” Discussion focused on whether progress on the transportation agenda could be achieved by activating existing supporters around the country rather than shifting public opinion across the country as a whole.

Presence of policy disagreements in the community—Attendees asked the panel whether cooperation among diverse stakeholders with fundamental policy disagreements is possible. Discussion focused on the fact that without action, none of the stakeholders will achieve any of their policy goals. Cooperation on a communications effort to create urgency is necessary, but such an effort does not need to present a consensus on every policy question.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

I believe that we have got a fundamental disconnect between what we perceive to be the needs and what we perceive the resources devoted to those needs to be... Supermajorities of roughly 75% turned thumbs down to paying additional taxes to fund transportation.

JAMES H. BURNLEY

- 3:30 – 3:45pm **Welcome and Call to Action**
Governor Gerald L. Baliles, Director and C.E.O., Miller Center;
 Governor of Virginia (1986-1990)
- 3:45 – 4:30pm **Open Plenary Session:**
The Outlook For Reauthorizing And Financing America's Highway
 We are at a crossroads in transportation policy planning, when Congress and the administration face difficult choices and state and local governments will be deeply affected by funding choices. The nation will either benefit from our actions or be changed in negative ways.
Jack Basso, Director of Program Finance and Management,
 American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials
- 4:30 – 6:00pm **Keynote Panel: Transportation Secretaries' Roundtable**
 Five former secretaries of transportation will trace efforts to publicize transportation messages to the American public over the course of presidential administrations and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of those efforts.
The Honorable James H. Burnley, Secretary of Transportation (1987-1989)
The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner, Secretary of Transportation (1989-1991)
The Honorable Rodney E. Slater, Secretary of Transportation (1997-2001)
The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary of Transportation (2001-2006)
The Honorable Mary E. Peters, Secretary of Transportation (2006-2009)
- 6:30 – 8:00pm **Dinner & Presidential Recordings Presentation**
 A historical review of the authorization of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 and President Johnson's negotiations with Congress over Highway Trust funds. These recordings are the holdings of the Miller Center Presidential Recordings Program and are available online.
Marc Selverstone, Director of Presidential Studies, Miller Center

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

9:00 – 10:45am Panel Discussion: Where Are We Now?

The session will provide a review of the current state of thinking about how best to forge a new approach to transportation in America, reviewing recent efforts and progress and identifying future opportunities.

Jeff Shane, Panel Chair, and Partner, Hogan Lovells

Marcia Hale, Director, Building America's Future Education Fund

Emil Frankel, Director of Transportation Studies, Bipartisan Policy Center

David Burwell, Director, Energy and Climate Program, Carnegie Endowment

Nicholas Turner, Managing Director, The Rockefeller Foundation

Ashley Halsey, III, Staff Writer, *The Washington Post*

10:55am – 12:15pm

Panel Discussion: The Compelling Story Of Transportation And Economic Growth

One of the most worrisome consequences of continuing on the current course is the loss of international competitiveness. This panel will discuss how greater efficiencies in our transportation infrastructure would enhance economic vitality, and how businesses have effectively conveyed this message.

Janet Kavinsky, Panel Chair and Executive Director, Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Edward Wytkind, President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Steve Watson, Vice President, Government and External Affairs, Loews Government Affairs Services

Norman Chambers, CEO, NCI Building Systems, and Chair, Let's Rebuild America Leadership Council

12:15 – 12:45pm Keynote Speaker

The Honorable John Mica, Chair, House Infrastructure and Transportation Committee

1:15 – 3:00pm **Panel Discussion: Examining The Data And Establishing A Baseline On The Effectiveness Of Transportation Messaging**
Three organizations have conducted investigations into public opinion on transportation to uncover attitudes towards infrastructure investment and messaging that is successful in promoting transportation. Representatives from those organizations will discuss their findings in this panel.
James Corless, Panel Chair and Director, Transportation for America
Rich Thau, President, Presentation Testing, Inc.
Brian Pallasch, Managing Director of Government Relations and Infrastructure Initiatives, American Society of Civil Engineers
Jim Mulhall, Managing Director, SKDKnickerbocker

3:15 – 5:15 pm **Stakeholder Session**
From Impasse To Impact: Mapping A Path Forward
This summit will produce a marketing plan to move the new policy agenda forward that is aimed primarily at policymakers and the American public. The plan will discuss evolving trends in messaging and suggest tools to penetrate the consciousness of Americans and emphasize the importance of an optimally-functioning transportation network. The purpose of this sessions is to draw on the expertise of Glover Park Group—a strategic communications firm—while compiling a list of recommendations for further review and evaluation in the final panel of the day.

Catharine Ransom, Managing Director, Glover Park Group
Ryan Cunningham, Senior Vice President, Glover Park Group
Alex Mistri, Managing Director, Glover Park Group
Craig James, Managing Director, Glover Park Group

5:30 – 6:00pm **Conference Co-Chairs Reflections**
In closing, we will reconvene our conference co-chairs to review the discussion and offer their reactions to the recommendations formulated over the course of the previous two days, with the hope of identifying consensus views among participants and also determining the viability of the various plans.
The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary of Transportation (2001-2006)
The Honorable Samuel K. Skinner, Secretary of Transportation (1989-1991)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*We've got to do that heavy lifting now, and I don't think you did it
with us gathering in Washington...
We've got to hit the road.*

RODNEY E. SLATER

This report provides a blueprint of critical themes and recommendations for transportation messaging that emerged from the exchanges that took place during the Miller Center's 2011 David R. Goode National Transportation Policy Conference. The Miller Center offers its sincere thanks to the following organizers, participants, and facilitators of this biennial conference:

We are incredibly grateful for benefactors David R. Goode and Caterpillar, Inc and the generous financial support they provided for this event.

Norman Y. Mineta and Samuel K. Skinner, as well as Visiting Fellow and Conference Director Jeffrey N. Shane, provided extraordinary leadership throughout the planning and execution stages of this event, and we will also turn to them for ongoing support during the critical implementation phase.

We were honored to have three additional former secretaries of transportation serve on a panel during the conference, and we thank James H. Burnley, Mary E. Peters, and Rodney M. Slater for the unparalleled leadership and expertise that they brought to the discussion.

Similarly, as the current chairman of the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee, John R. Mica is at the forefront of calls to actions for transportation reform in Congress, and his keynote address at the conference was highly anticipated by all participants. We thank him for visiting the group and discussing the political climate as it pertains to transportation reform.

Additional conference panelists shaped the discussion at each session with the research and insights they imparted from their areas of expertise. We greatly appreciated the service of that group, which includes: Jack Basso, Marcia Hale, Emil Frankel, David Burwell, Nicholas Turner, Ashley Halsey III, Janet Kavinoky, Edward Wytkind, Steve Watson, James Corless, Rich Thau, Brian Pallasch, Jim Mulhall, Catharine Ransom, Ryan Cunningham, Alex Mistri, and Craig James. We thank Heather Crislip and Juliana Bush, who served as the organizers of the conference as well as the writers and editors of the initial draft. Marika Tatsutani also provided essential editorial assistance to get the report into its final draft form.

Miller Center staff and scholars, Marc Selverstone, Mike Greco, Amber Lautiger Reichert, Kevan Holdsworth, Monica Gray, and Kristy Schantz also provided important technical support at the conference itself, and we thank them for their essential help.

Editors: Heather Crislip, Juliana Bush, Kim Curtis **Photographer:** Amber Lautiger Reichert **Design:** Anne Hilton



The Miller Center is a nonpartisan institute that seeks to expand understanding of the presidency, policy, and political history, providing critical insights for the nation's governance challenges. Based at the University of Virginia, with offices in Charlottesville and in Washington, D.C., the Miller Center is committed to work grounded in rigorous scholarship and advanced through civil discourse. Gerald L. Baliles, 65th governor of Virginia and former chairman of the board of PBS, has served as director and CEO of the Miller Center since April 2006.



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